

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

IO-13 EB-07 /084 W

----- 033499

R 211425Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5432

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMCONSUL HONGKONG

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

USDEL PEKING

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 5828

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, US

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR SAXBE'S COURTESY CALL ON FOREIGN SECRETARY

SUMMARY: DURING A COURTESY CALL BY THE AMBASSADOR, FOREIGN SECRETARY JAGAT MEHTA DEVELOPED THE THESIS THAT INDIA UNDER THE EMERGENCY HAD MADE SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS AND WAS USING A BALANCE OF DISCIPLINE AND DEMOCRACY TO GET TO WORK ON FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS. AS PART OF AN APPROACH TO REMOVE ANY EXTERNAL IMPEDIMENTS TO THE RESOLUTION OF DOMESTIC PROBLEMS, IT HAD AGREED TO EXCHANGE AMBASSADORS WITH CHINA AND RESPONDED TO PAKISTAN'S OFFER TO WITHDRAW THE HIGHJACKING CASE FROM ICAO WITH A PROPOSAL FOR NEW NEGOTIATIONS. MEHTA DESCRIBED INDIA'S INTEREST AS STABILITY IN THE REGION AND HOPED THE USG VIEWED THE REGION SIMILARLY. THE AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT THE OUTLOOK FOR DEMOCRACY IN THE UNDER-DEVELOPED WORLD DID NOT SEEM GOOD AND HE HOPED THAT MRS. GANDHI, WHO HAD SAID THE EMERGENCY WAS

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TEMPORARY, COULD ACHIEVE HER OBJECTS AND RESTORE THE PREVIOUS

SYSTEM. THE USG WOULD NOT INJECT ITSELF INTO INDIAN AFFAIRS AND IN REGIONAL MATTERS WOULD USE ITS INFLUENCE TO ENCOURAGE THE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONSHIPS. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING A COURTESY CALL ON THE NEW FOREIGN SECRETARY, JAGAT MEHTA, ON APRIL 21, THE AMBASSADOR TOLD MEHTA THAT, CONTRARY TO PRESS REPORTS, HE HAD COME TO INDIA FOR A TWO-YEAR ASSIGNMENT AND STILL INTENDED TO STICK TO THAT PLAN. THE AMBASSADOR REMARKED THAT HE WAS ENCOURAGED BY WHAT HE SAW IN INDIA, AND ABOUT INDIA'S MOVES REGARDING CHINA AND PAKISTAN.

2. MEHTA'S REPLY WAS A LONG PRESENTATION ON INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY. HIS THEME WAS THAT THE TOTALITY OF INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY ROSE FROM ITS DOMESTIC ASPIRATIONS.

3. MEHTA EXPLAINED THIS WAS A HOPEFUL TIME FOR INDIA. HOPES WERE NOT BASED SIMPLY ON ONE GOOD MONSOON. THERE WAS ALSO INDUSTRIAL GROWTH, STABILITY, AND CONFIDENCE. HE SAID IF IT WAS THE US JUDGEMENT--AND IT WAS CERTAINLY THE INDIAN--THAT STABILITY IN THE AREA WAS IMPORTANT, THE WHOLE PICTURE IN INDIA LOOKED DIFFERENT TODAY. INDIA'S PERFORMANCE UNDER THE EMERGENCY HAD EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN INCONCEIVABLE TWENTY YEARS AGO THAT THE GOI COULD GO AS FAR AS IT DID IN ITS RECENT STATEMENT ON POPULATION. PROGRESS HAD BEEN THE RESULT OF A "PRIORITY OF NATIONAL DISCIPLINE" WHICH NOW ENABLED INDIA TO LOOK TO LONGER-TERM OBJECTIVES. THE EMERGENCY WAS NOT THE END OF DEMOCRACY BUT WAS AN EFFORT TO DETERMINE HOW TO HAVE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY. ACHIEVEMENT OF LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES SHOULD NOT BE TOO MUCH IMPEDED BY POLITICAL PROCESSES OF DELAY AND OBSTRUCTION. INDIA MUST FIND ITS OWN SOLUTIONS TO ITS SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS IN A BALANCE BETWEEN DISCIPLINE AND DEMOCRACY. IN DOING THIS IT HAD NO ULTERIOR INTENTIONS IN REGARD TO ITS NEIGHBORS.

4. IT WAS NATURAL, MEHTA CONTINUED, THAT INDIA SHOULD NOW WANT TO REMOVE ANY EXTERNAL IMPEDIMENTS TO THE RESOLUTION OF DOMESTIC PROBLEMS. INDIA HAD THEREFORE TAKEN THE INITIATIVE TO REACH AN UNDERSTANDING WITH CHINA ON THE EXCHANGE OF AMBASSADORS. INDIA HAD FOR MANY YEARS--AS FAR BACK AS CONFIDENTIAL

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SHASTRI'S PRIME MINISTERSHIP--MADE MANY ATTEMPTS TO HAVE A DIALOGUE WITH CHINA BUT IT HAD OBTAINED NO RESPONSE. INDIA HAD AVOIDED PROVOCATION EITHER ON THE GROUND OR IN THE FORM OF PROPAGANDA. IT HAD WONDERED WHETHER CHINA WAS INTERESTED IN A STABLE OR UNSTABLE SOUTH ASIA AS IT WATCHED CHINA'S RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN AND ITS SUPPORT TO NAGA DISSIDENTS. AGREEMENT TO EXCHANGE AMBASSADORS WAS AS FAR AS MATTERS HAD GONE SO FAR DESPITE PRESS AND DIPLOMATIC SPECULATION. IT

WOULD TAKE TIME TO SEE WHERE THIS MOVE MAY LEAD.

5. SIMULTANEOUSLY, MEHTA EXPLAINED, INDIA READILY RESPONDED WHEN PAKISTAN INDICATED IT WAS WILLING TO WITHDRAW THE HIGHJACKING CASE FROM ICAO. INDIA'S REPLY TO BHUTTO ON THIS HAD NOT BEEN DELAYED; PERHAPS BHUTTO HAD SUGGESTED THIS BEFORE HE KNEW THAT MRS. GANDHI'S ANSWER WAS ON THE WAY. MEHTA SAID THE GOI HAS NOT YET SEEN BHUTTO'S MOST RECENT ANSWER BUT THEY UNDERSTAND THAT IT IS EN ROUTE.

6. THE AMBASSADOR REMARKED THAT RESUMPTION OF THE SIMLA PROCESS WAS A SIGNIFICANT STEP AND IT WAS REALISTIC FOR THE PAKISTANIS TO AGREE. IN REGARD TO THE CHINA MOVE, CHINA SEEMED TO BE RECOGNIZING INDIA'S POSITION IN SOUTH ASIA, AND INDIA RECOGNIZING THAT CHINA HAD INTERESTS IN ALL OF SOUTH ASIA. MEHTA DESCRIBED INDIA'S INTEREST IN THE REGION AS STABILITY. IT HAD MORE NEIGHBORS IN SOUTH ASIA THAN ANY OTHER COUNTRY AND COULD LIVE WITH THE DIVERSE NATIONAL PERSONALITIES WHICH SURROUNDED IT. WHETHER INDIA COULD CONTRIBUTE TO THOSE NATIONS--IT HAD THE INTENTION TO OFFER-- WAS FOR THEM TO DECIDE. INDIA WANTED TO RESOLVE PROBLEMS WITH PAKISTAN. IT HAD REACHED AN AGREEMENT ON TRADE AND GONE OUT OF ITS WAY TO GIVE SUBSTANCE TO IT BUT THE PAKISTANI RESPONSE HAD BEEN MINIMAL. IN REGARD TO BANGLADESH, THERE WAS THE PROBLEM OF FARAKKA. INDIA'S POSITION WAS THAT A TECHNICAL MISSION SHOULD GO TO DACCA BEFORE A GOODWILL DELEGATION. OTHERWISE, THERE WOULD BE NO FACTS TO DISCUSS. HE HOPED THAT THE FARAKKA ISSUE WOULD BE LOOKED UPON IN DACCA AS A PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED BY TECHNICIANS RATHER THAN A CONVENIENT ISSUE TO REMAIN UNRESOLVED, AND BY SO REMAINING PROVIDING SCAPEGOATS FOR DIVERSION OF ATTENTION. THE FACTS OF SOUTH ASIA WERE GEOGRAPHIC INTERDEPENDENCE AND ITS NATIONS MUST DISCOVER THE LOGIC OF STABILITY. MEHTA SAID HE HOPED THE USG ALSO

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VIEWS THE REGION IN THIS WAY.

7. THE AMBASSADOR ANSWERED THAT HE FOUND A PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO THE PROBLEMS OF SOUTH ASIA IN WASHINGTON. THERE WAS A VIEW THAT SIMPLE THINGS SUCH AS THE OVERFLIGHT ISSUE COULD BE SOLVED AND THAT SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES SHOULD NOT GET STUCK ON QUESTIONS LIKE KASHMIR.

8. REFERRING TO MEHTA'S COMMENTS ABOUT THE EMERGENCY, THE AMBASSADOR TOLD MEHTA THAT THE OUTLOOK FOR DEMOCRACY IN THE UNDERDEVELOPED WORLD DID NOT SEEM GOOD. HE HAD JUST ATTENDED A CONFERENCE ON THIS SUBJECT IN BREMEN. HE NOTED THAT MRS. GANDHI HAD SAID THE EMERGENCY WAS TEMPORARY. IF SHE COULD MANAGE TO ACHIEVE HER OBJECTS AND THEN RESTORE THE PREVIOUS SYSTEM IT WOULD BE A GREAT ACHIEVEMENT. AS FAR AS THE USG

WAS CONCERNED, THE SECRETARY HAD TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT AFTER OUR EXPERIENCE AT BEING THE POLICEMAN OF THE WORLD WE HAD DECIDED TO HELP COUNTRIES SOLVE PROBLEMS ONLY WHEN ASKED. WE WOULD NOT INJECT OURSELVES AS VOLUNTEERS. IN THE AFFAIRS OF INDIA, PAKISTAN AND CHINA, WE USE WHAT LITTLE INFLUENCE WE HAVE TO ENCOURAGE NORMAL RELATIONSHIPS. IN REGARD TO THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE UNDERDEVELOPED WORLD, MUCH OF IT IS AVAILABLE ONLY FROM PRIVATE FOREIGN COMPANIES AND THERE SEEMS TO BE A TREND IN INDIA TO RECOGNIZE THIS.

9. AS HE WAS PREPARED TO LEAVE, THE AMBASSADOR TOLD MEHTA THAT EVEN IF THERE WERE NO SERIOUS PROBLEMS BETWEEN INDIA AND THE US THEY SHOULD GET TOGETHER FROM TIME TO TIME FOR DISCUSSIONS SUCH AS THE ONE THEY HAD JUST CONCLUDED. MEHTA HEARTILY AGREED.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, POLITICAL CONCESSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976NEWDE05828
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760151-0867
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760439/aaaabgty.tel
Line Count: 184
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 MAR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <29 MAR 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <30 MAR 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AMBASSADOR SAXBE'S COURTESY CALL ON FOREIGN SECRETARY SUMMARY: DURING A COURTESY CALL BY THE AMBASSADOR, FOREIGN
TAGS: PFOR, IN, US, PK, CH, (SAXBE, WILLIAM B), (MEHTA, JAGAT)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006